



Strategic Grant Seeking

Step 1: Decide to be a Strategic Grant Seeker

Before deciding in knee-jerk fashion to pursue a new grant opportunity that is due next week, slow down and began to see grant writing as a proactive and strategic process. Decide to be a strategic grant seeker. Take a deep breath and think about the grant selection process. Winning grant dollars is a competitive undertaking. And it is becoming even more competitive.

As friend of mine would say, “do not confuse activity with results”! You can choose to run around and work like a “mad man or woman” for the next week trying to meet a grant application deadline for a grant program that isn’t truly a match for your organization’s goals and priorities or you can begin to approach grant writing as a calculated and deliberate process.

Step 2: Conduct an Organizational Analysis

Look closely at your organizational situation. Identify your organizations strengths and achievements. These might include activities, programs, or services considered outstanding exemplary, including those that have received:

- ✓ Awards
- ✓ Special Recognition
- ✓ Superior Findings from Studies or Evaluations
- ✓ Funder Site Visitations
- ✓ Media Coverage

Take stock of staff expertise. What staff skills and talents does the organization possess? Are there areas of weakness in staff expertise or professional development? Inventory current services provided by your organization, customer satisfaction levels, and strengths and challenges. What solid partnerships exists with community organizations or institutions?

Step 3: Research Current and Upcoming Grant Opportunities

Your organization can conduct your own search for prospective funders. However, this is usually a time-consuming undertaking particularly, if your staff does not have prior grant research experience. If you have little or no background in doing such research the Internet is a good place to start. You could also subscribe to funding newsletters and databases. Some of these resources are without cost. Our company, SmartWORKS offers a weekly e-newsletter at not cost to you.

SmartWORKS also offers customized grant research services and utilizes a variety of electronic databases and directories to identify prospective funders. We also publish a free weekly e-newsletter which that provides you with the latest information on new funding programs, upcoming grant deadlines, conferences, training, and relevant information for grant seekers.

Step 4: Investigate the Background, Priorities and Future of Each Prospective Funding Source

It is vital that you get to know each prospective funder. Carefully assess THE funder's priorities for consistency with your project idea. Funder preferences can usually be ascertained by reading the funders program purpose, mission, or outcome statement. If you are unclear after reviewing website or print material, calling the prospective funder to asks specific questions is a good idea.

Step 5: Make a Considered Decision to Pursue A Particular Funding Opportunity and Get Board Support

Only after you have thoroughly investigated prospective funders, can you make a considered decision about whether to pursue a particular grant opportunity, or not. Grant writing can be very time consuming. When you consider staff time invested in organizing meetings, planning with committees, and writing the grant application, only those grants that stand a good chance of receiving a funding award are truly the required time and effort.

If you were to record and calculate the costs related to staff and material resources required throughout the application preparation and submission process, you will find that grant writing can be a labor-intensive and expensive activity.

Once you have made a decision that a particular grant application is worthy of the amount of time and effort required, take action to garner support from appropriate staff and the organization's Board of directors.

Step 6: Get Your Organizational Documents In Order

In order to be taken seriously by funders, your organizational documents must be in order. You will need to be able to provide an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 501-C (3) certification to document your organization's tax exempt status. There are many other documents required by funders including: articles of incorporation, list of board of director's members, organizational chart, annual report, financial audit, and staff job descriptions, and key staff resumes

Step 7: Design Programs That Connect With Current Work Efforts and Are High Quality

As much as possible, proposed program services should to be connected with current work efforts within your organization. When programs are structured to compliment and collaborate with each other, chances for long-term sustainability are increased. It may be desirable for new program services to share joint supervisory or other staff from established programs. This is often helpful in ensuring internal organizational coordination and collaboration.